Statement

Pending Development Projects in NER

Sl. No.	Particulars	Number of Projects pending for		
		more than 3 years	more than 1 year but less than 3 years	less than 1 year
1.	NLCPR Projects	20	91	60
2.	NEC Projects	1	23	0
	TOTAL:	21	114	60

Process of visas for Pakistan

3859. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry is easing the process of visa for Pakistan; and

(b) the number of visas that were issued in 2006 and 2005?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) In October 2005, Government had proposed that the existing visa agreement between the two countries be liberalised and also handed over the draft of a new agreement. Response from the Government of Pakistan to this has recently been received.

(b) The High Commission of India in Islamabad issued 90663 visas in 2005 and 92334 visas in 2006 to Pakistani nationals intending to visit India.

Indian PoWs in Pakistani jails

3860. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many Indian Prisoners of War are languishing in Pakistani jails since the 1971 war and the prisoners' families blame Government for their unending misery;

(b) whether it is also a fact that India returned 93,000 Pakistani soldiers caught in the 1971 war as part of the Shimla Accord but Pakistan chose to abuse it by not returning ours; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to ensure that Pakistan releases our Prisoners of War?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) According to available information, 74 Indian PoWs are believed to be in Pakistani jails including 54 since 1971-72. However Pakistan does not accept the presence of Indian PoWs in its jails, Government have been consistently taking up this issue with Government of Pakistan at various levels.

(c) In pursuance of the efforts to locate Indian PoWs, Government have been requesting the Pakistan Government to accept a visit by the families of the missing defence personnel to Pakistan. In January 2007, the matter was again taken up with the Government of Pakistan and it has agreed to accept a visit of families of PoWs.

Relief and rehabilitation of refugees

3861. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the question of providing relief and rehabilitation to refugees from one country to the other was taken up at recent meeting of the SAARC countries;

(b) if so, what specific proposals pertaining to this issue were considered at the SAARC meet; and

(c) the decisions that were taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No,

(b) and (c) Do not arise.